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Building the Education Revolution Bulletin No. 7

(1) BER program update

Celebrating NSP

More than 97% of all National School Pride projects are complete, placing NSW well ahead of the national average.

A highlight of the NSP program is the delivery of 3,432 Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) bundles in 648 NSW schools, valued at approximately $25 million. IWBs provide students and teachers access to up-to-the-minute media resources from real-world applications, enhancing student engagement and turning every classroom into a connected learning environment. Opportunities for information sharing and interaction between schools across NSW, Australia and indeed the world open up innumerable teaching and learning possibilities.

> "The shade structures are a fantastic asset to the school…The school is so grateful for the funding as we would never have been able to raise the funds needed to undertake this type of project. The structures look great from the road and have given the school a real boost to keep improving the school."
>
> *Mrs Bobbie Macaulay,*
> *Principal of Junee PS*

NSP has improved both the inside and outside of schools. Schools have received a significant amount of refurbishment works, dramatically improving learning and play areas. A slide show of successful NSP projects is available on the BER website.

BER – one year on

It has been a busy time since the last BER Bulletin, and the BER Program Office would like to thank school principals for their ongoing support and cooperation. Construction work ramped up during the school break and significant progress has been made across all elements of the BER program.

The P21 program has now commenced construction on 1,387 of its 2,395 projects (56%). The SLC program has started construction on 106 of its 118 projects (89%). All this is supporting around 15,000 full-time equivalent jobs per year in communities across the state.

The Minister for Education and Training marked the BER program's one-year anniversary by visiting Minto Public School to see the new $2 million hall and covered outdoor learning area, which was completed under P21. More on this visit and our achievements to date can be found on the BER website.

OH&S: updating school safety procedures

Throughout construction at your school, it is critically important that occupational health and safety issues are effectively managed. School sites need to remain safe for all staff, students and visitors and school safety procedures may need to be reviewed and amended as construction progresses. For example, if your school's evacuation meeting point is now fenced off due to construction works, you will need to update your evacuation plans.

The Department of Education and Training's Occupational Health and Safety Directorate has developed an OH&S Information Sheet to assist school Principals to keep their schools safe.

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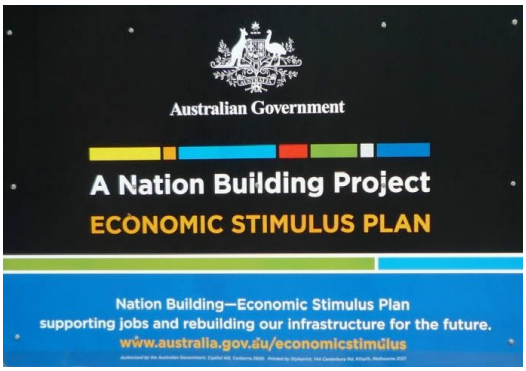
Australian Government Nation Building signage

All schools with P21 or SLC projects need to have the Australian Government's Nation Building signage erected on site (see picture, right).



Installation

The Australian Government delivers the signs directly to schools. Signs for schools funded under P21 Rounds 1 and 2 and SLC should already have been delivered. Signs for schools funded under P21 Round 3 should be delivered within the next few weeks.

The BER Program Office has requested that each school's Managing Contractor arrange installation of the Nation Building sign. If you have received your sign and it is not yet installed, please liaise directly with your site manager or Managing Contractor. The sign should be installed at the start of the project (or as soon as it is delivered, if it arrives after site establishment) and remain in place until the entire BER program is complete. The signage must be visible to a main road, even if the construction works are away from the public eye. If this requirement should raise an issue, the contractor should contact BERRecognition@deewr.gov.au to arrange alternative placement options.

Authorisation stickers on Nation Building signs

Following recent advice from the Australian Electoral Commission, all Nation Building signs must display appropriate authorisation under the provisions of the Commonwealth *Electoral Act 1918*. The Australian Government sent authorisation stickers to schools which had already received their Nation Building signs in November last year, and requested the stickers to be placed at the bottom of the sign.

This week, the Australian Government has emailed those schools from the DEEWR Recognition Mailbox, asking them to confirm that they have placed the authorisation sticker on the sign.

This affects schools funded under Rounds 1 and 2 of P21, and schools funded under SLC. It does not affect schools funded under Round 3 of P21, as their signs will arrive with the authorisation already printed on.

If this affects your school, please make sure you take the time to place the authorisation sticker on the Nation Building sign at your school. Importantly, please also make sure you return the email form by close of business Tuesday 16 February (Tuesday next week) to BERRecognition@deewr.gov.au.

If you have any questions about the Australian Government's email, stickers, or BER signs generally, please contact the Australian Government BER Taskforce at BERRecognition@deewr.gov.au.

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(2) What's new at www.ber.nsw.gov.au

Estimated cost breakdowns

The BER website now has cost breakdowns for over 775 P21 school projects in 610 schools, with a further 151 emailed to school Principals and awaiting upload to the website. More cost breakdowns are being added each week.

Cost breakdowns are emailed to school Principals before being posted on the school's page on the BER website. School Principals are encouraged to contact their Regional Program Director or Principal Liaison Officer if they have questions regarding the costs of their project.

Vodcasts on www.ber.nsw.gov.au

The BER website now has a dedicated link to BER vodcasts for easy reference.

Online vodcasts include one from Angus Dawson, the BER Program Director, speaking about program challenges and the project costings which are being posted on the website. There is also a message from the Minister for Education and Training, Verity Firth MP.

New program vodcasts will be added throughout the year.

P21 Value for Money webpage

The BER website now includes a P21 Value for Money webpage that brings together information about how the BER Program Office is managing budgets on each school project and across the program. This information builds on the existing P21 Project Budget Fact Sheet and the Managing the P21 Program Fact Sheet.

Within the new P21 Value for Money webpage, there is a Budget Transfers Participation section that publicly acknowledges the schools that have already agreed to allow any money that is left over from their full P21 project to be transferred to another NSW public school that needs it. Because of these schools, there are other schools that will receive their project as approved by the Australian Government.

Standard Designs Fact Sheets

All new P21 buildings and refurbishment projects comply with the Department of Education and Training's Schools Facilities Standards (SFS). The SFS specifies the type and size of different learning spaces required in schools and the quality benchmarks that buildings must meet.

The BER website now includes three new Standard Designs Fact Sheets outlining what is included in new classrooms, halls and libraries being delivered through P21. These fact sheets complement the standard design lay outs and the video walk-throughs of some of the main areas of schools.

(3) Primary Schools for the 21st Century

P21 project handover – things to consider

It is a very exciting time when your school's new facilities are ready to start being used. However, it can also be a very busy time involving a number of parties, including the school Principal, the BER Program Office, the Managing Contractor and the Asset Management Unit.

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We will shortly be releasing a fact sheet which outlines the roles and responsibilities of school Principals and all other parties. If you have specific questions about handover at your school you can contact your Managing Contractor, Principal Liaison Officer or the BER Program Office's Regional Program Director for your region.

Four important things school Principals need to be aware of at handover:

- If your school's P21 project includes a **new canteen**, you are required to **notify the NSW Food Authority** before the canteen can be used. You can do this by getting a notification form from your local council or on-line at www.foodnotify.nsw.gov.au. Failure to notify the NSW Food Authority may result in a penalty of up to $2,750.

- If your school is located in a **bushfire zone** and it is receiving a new building, the bushfire section of your school's **Emergency Management Plan will need to be updated before handover**. The Managing Contractor won't be able to complete handover and you won't be able to use the building until an acceptable bushfire evacuation plan is in place. We will shortly be writing to school Principals affected by this issue clarifying what needs to be done.

- The Australian Government's guidelines require recognition ceremonies to be held by all schools receiving funding under P21 and SLC. The BER Program Office will contact schools when works are finished to help organise your school's ceremony. Schools need to make sure that they do not hold any ceremonies that are in conflict with the Australian Government's procedures, which can be found on the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) website. The NSW Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations has been informed about the Australian Government's guidelines on recognition ceremonies.

- If Principals are contacted by local or metropolitan media about their BER project they should follow the DET Media Protocol which is available on the DET intranet.

Re-phasing update

In the last BER Bulletin it was confirmed that the Australian Government requires NSW to move just under $108 million worth of P21 funding into 2011/2012. This is a relatively small amount of funding and the impact on the program will be minimal. A proposal to meet this requirement is currently being considered and we will provide further information as soon as possible.

The Deputy Prime Minister has assured schools that the BER program will be delivered in full. The requirement to move some funding into 2011/2012 does not change any school's approved project or funding allocation. The only change is the timeframe in which some projects may be delivered.

Project and program contingency allocation

On a construction project, it is not possible to know all the potential site risks which may emerge once construction starts on-site, although every effort is taken to identify risks through pre-construction site surveys and ground investigations. This is why it is considered best practice to set aside an amount for contingency.

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On P21 projects the BER Program Office has set aside 5% from every school's allocation as a construction contingency. The contingency is in addition to the school's project budget and is *only* available to cover the costs of unforeseen risks; not to pay for additional project scope.

Contingency funding is set aside to cover *only* the costs of unforeseen risks that emerge during construction such as:

- Buried asbestos, soil contamination, archaeological remains or endangered species.
- The costs of electrical substation upgrades or augmentation works if they are needed and an allocation hasn't been made because the project is not a hall or a library.
- Topographical issues such as the site being steeper than the pre-construction survey indicated, requiring extra drainage works and different building foundations.
- Geographical issues where, for example, the pre-construction soil survey indicated that the soil was high strength, well draining clay, but excavations find large pockets of sandy soil or pooled groundwater. This means that foundation design changes are required as well as additional underground drainage infrastructure.
- The cost of paying up to 105% of the benchmark value (BMV) for the project where the actual costs incurred by the Managing Contractor exceed the BMV.

Just as it is best practice to set aside a contingency upfront for unforeseen risks, it's also best practice to review the amount of contingency set aside over time. We now have over half of P21 projects in construction and a review of the contingency strategy has confirmed that the total amount of contingency across the program is sufficient. However, at a school level some projects need more contingency funding, and some projects don't need the full amount because fewer unforeseen risks actually occur.

To fund the costs associated with unforeseen risks effectively, it is necessary to pool the total amount of contingency funding which has been set aside. In the first instance, each school's 5% contingency will be used to cover the costs of unforeseen risks at that school. Any amount of contingency which is not required to cover the costs of unforeseen risks at one school may then be used to cover unforeseen costs at another P21 public school project, in accordance with the Australian Government's guidelines. To find out what this means for your school, contact your Principal Liaison Officer or Regional Program Director.

All P21 funding allocated to NSW public schools by the Australian Government must be spent on P21 projects. It cannot – and will not – be used for any other purpose.

(3) National School Pride

Extensions to the NSP deadline

The Australian Government has confirmed that it will extend the deadline for NSP projects to 30 June 2010 if required. Further extensions of time may also be considered on a case by case basis in exceptional circumstances, such as projects affected by bushfire or flood.

In NSW we have already successfully completed over 97% of the NSP program by the deadline date of 1 February 2010. The extension of time will help the small number of projects in NSW where exceptional circumstances have caused delays, such as supplier delays and wet weather.

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(4) Science and Language Centres

New SLC Principal Liaison Officer (PLO)

Pam Peelgrane, Manager of Principal Liaison, will be acting as the PLO contact for Principals receiving a science or language centre project. Pam can be contacted at: pam.peelgrane@det.nsw.edu.au.

NSW leads the way in curriculum support for new language centres

The BER Program Office is working closely with the Languages Unit, Curriculum K-12 Directorate to ensure that schools are able to effectively use the equipment in the new language centres and develop strategies that will enhance student outcomes.

We are creating language centre networks by connecting new and existing language centres across NSW. NSW is leading the way with the creation of these networking relationships and we are working with other States and Territories to expand these networks Australia-wide. Among other benefits, these networks have the potential for geographically isolated students to access languages that may not be offered at the school.

The language learning centres include an interactive whiteboard, video conferencing equipment and desktop sharing software, providing new and unique opportunities to enhance teaching and learning, linking teachers and students with peers, experts and places within the classroom and beyond.

NSW is the only state to have a dedicated BER Languages Curriculum Advisor to work with teachers in this way. This professional support, along with the new infrastructure, will ensure real long-term benefits for students, teachers and the broader school community.

(5) Updated contact details

The BER Program Office would like to thank Geoff Dodds, Anne Sheldrick and Peter Wright for the amazing contribution they have made to the success of the BER Program. We wish them all the best now that they have returned to their substantive roles as Principals of Heathcote High School, Prestons Public School and Valley View Public School respectively.

The Managing Contractor is the Principal's first point of contact on all issues. Principals and Managing Contractors are successfully working closely across the state, solving problems and progressing projects. If Principals aren't able to resolve a problem by working with the Managing Contractor, they can contact the BER Program Office through their regional Principal Liaison Officer or Regional Program Director.

You can always access the most up to date contact information for Principal Liaison Officers, Regional Program Directors and Managing Contractors on the DET intranet site or by using the following links:

1. P21 Principal Liaison Officers and Managing Contractors
2. NSP Principal Liaison Officers
3. SLC Principal Liaison Officers